



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE ISSUED: May 11, 2011 REPORT NO:

ATTENTION: Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee

SUBJECT: San Diego Fire-Rescue, Lifeguard Division Informational Report:
"An update on Junior Lifeguards and Outreach efforts"

REFERENCE: None

SUMMARY:

The San Diego Lifeguard Service has a long-standing goal to educate the public about aquatic safety and help those in need. While working at the beach and Mission Bay, lifeguards are in constant contact with the over 20 million annual visitors each year. As ambassadors for the City, we are proud to deliver a quality product with excellent customer service. We know that each public contact may be a lifesaving situation or a chance to make a favorable 'first impression'.

With that in mind, we are always striving to deliver more to our beach goers. Our desire to focus on the value-added experience at the beach has left countless visitors enchanted by our beautiful beaches and impressed with San Diego Lifeguards.

When we talk about adding value for our customers, one of the ways we provide that value is through the Junior Lifeguard Program (JG) and our outreach efforts. Last year, 100% of those surveyed said the Junior Lifeguard Program was valuable and 99% of those respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the safety of the Program. Each parent is asked to pay \$500 per child and 99% said the Program was worth the cost (under \$7.50 per child/per hour). This feedback highlights the appreciation from our customers and motivates us to continue to deliver a quality product.

The Junior Lifeguard Program began in 1991 and is an offshoot of the Lifeguard Service. The Program is offered to children between the ages of 9-17. There are two sessions, each four weeks long, for 3½ hours every morning or afternoon. The program is filled to maximum capacity every year and the total 2010 enrollment was 1,078 children that included 126 scholarships. The Program remains in full compliance with the original intent, goals and mission set forth by the City Council and 2011 may be our best year ever.

Each year we have looked to create a more efficient system so that we can continue to represent the City in a positive light and deliver a superior program. This year we introduced a new registration process and it has been a huge success with our customers and has added improvements to our accounting procedures.

The JG Program utilizes about 40 instructors and assistant instructors. Approximately 20 of the instructors are seasonal lifeguards who split time between beach lifeguarding and the JG Program.

The remaining staff is 16 and 17 year old paid interns who serve as assistants to the instructors. The internship program is designed for aspiring professional lifeguards who are mentored throughout the process.

Some of the significant highlights planned from this summer's program include our annual environmental awareness day, leadership and goal setting training by the military, a public safety day, and the ever-popular OB pier jump. Each of these activities supports our mission statement and enhances our goal to create "Skills for Life" for the children.

Outreach and Partnerships

Since 2010, the JG Program implemented a four-phase comprehensive outreach approach as part of the overall community vision of 'Waterproofing San Diego'. This initiative is provided at no cost to children of low income. It allows San Diegans the opportunity for

- Aquatic safety information and education
- Exposure to basic water survival skills
- The opportunity to become proficient in an aquatic environment
- To work in the aquatic safety profession

Since we implemented this approach, we realized we had a solid plan that needed to be more specific and targeted. Our ultimate goal is to educate the San Diego public in the area of drowning prevention and aquatic safety using a metric system that tracks how many children are able to participate in the entire experience, which includes:

- Water safety presentations
- Learn-to-swim lessons
- Bridge to the beach
- JG scholarship opportunity

The results of our efforts have been rewarding. This spring, we have provided over 1,000 children with water safety presentations at numerous elementary and middle schools. By June, we plan to reach an additional 1,000+ children. The learn-to-swim for free lessons have been and will be provided at Jackie Robinson YMCA, City Heights pool and five City pools. In addition, a handful of Bridge to the Beach events will occur that often provide the first beach visit for children who have participated in a water safety presentation and learn-to-swim lessons. Our desired outcome will be to offer JG scholarships to needy children who will be able to culminate their aquatic safety understanding.

The approach brings together a community with common goals that has allowed us to cultivate relationships with strategic partners. These partners include the San Diego Lifesaving Association, the San Diego Parks and Recreation Department, the San Diego City Unified School District, Safe Kids Coalition, Rady-Children's hospital, select San Diego YMCAs and the San Diego Junior Lifeguard Foundation. In addition to these partners, additional assistance has been sought from other San Diego community groups and organizations.

This entire plan would not be possible without a funding component. So, two years ago, the 501(c)(3) San Diego Junior Lifeguard Foundation was formed to assist with funding challenges associated with our outreach efforts. Since its inception, the Junior Lifeguard Foundation has raised over \$100,000 and has become the primary funding arm of our outreach efforts. The money raised would not have been accomplished without the private support from a variety of groups and

individuals including the Mission Beach Women's Club, the La Jolla Cove Swim Club and the Mission Bay Rotary Club.

May is Drowning Prevention Month

The need to educate the community on aquatic safety and drowning prevention remains a top priority of the San Diego Lifeguards. The reason every May is declared "Drowning Prevention" month is based on the fact that throngs of San Diegans will engage in water activity at their community or backyard pools, beaches and bays.

The JG Program and the outreach efforts will help solidify and deliver the message of drowning prevention and aquatic education. The need to reinforce that message is vital because drowning is the second leading cause of non-natural death in the U.S. among children under 15. In San Diego County, it is the leading cause of non-natural death of children under 5.

Future plans

Over the next year, we hope to accomplish four major goals. First, we hope to expand our JG Program to include 7 and 8 year old children to increase their aquatic safety skills. Second, we will apply for a Kaiser Permanente grant that will help fund our four-phased outreach efforts. Thirdly, we want to complete our first draft of our aquatic safety elementary school book to be introduced at a local school. This book will help communicate the 'Waterproofing San Diego' vision. Lastly, we hope to begin a dialogue with the San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative to determine how we can partner in the future.

How you can help

As influential leaders in San Diego, you have the ability to affect change every day. Our Junior Lifeguard Program and outreach efforts are attempting to affect change for our youth using the 'Waterproofing San Diego' vision. You can assist our efforts by:

1. Accepting our invitation to visit the JG Program this summer
2. Supporting the San Diego Junior Lifeguard Foundation by attending our "Start of Summer" Fundraiser on June 25 and/ or our pancake breakfast event on August 6 (www.sdjgfoundation.org)
3. Keeping the outreach programs in mind when speaking with your community members about programs that serve children from all economic backgrounds and the need to raise funds to help less fortunate children to learn to swim and be safe in and around any water environment.
4. Providing networking contacts to allow us to continue to pursue the 'Waterproofing San Diego' vision.

REQUESTED ACTION:

This is an informational item only. No action is required by the Committee or the City Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:


Accept the Report.

FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS: N/A

PREVIOUS COUNCIL and/or COMMITTEE ACTIONS: N/A

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS: Ongoing

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND PROJECTED IMPACTS: Community and Citizens


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